



Katheryn Leopoldseder's 'For God so loved the world...'

[Sep 13th, 2010](#) by [Kevin Murray](#).



*Katheryn Leopoldseder 'For God so loved the world... (70 x 7 Used, Disposable Communion Cup Necklace)'
490 recycled communion cups, fresh water pearls, 18ct gold, Gold plated sterling silver, stainless steel,
2008, 260cmL x 8cmW x 3cmH, photograph by Jeremy Dillon*

Katheryn Leopoldseder is a Melbourne jeweller who came through RMIT Gold & Silversmithing and now works at Abbotsford Convent, in a shared studio with Phoebe Porter.

While supplying *e.g.etal* with quality production jewellery, she has also managed to produce epic jewellery works for exhibition. In her six years since graduation, Leopoldseder has shown a capacity to wreak weighty themes from what might otherwise seem a purely ornamental medium like jewellery.

Her work is disarmingly ambivalent. She manages to express great beauty in what appears to be the wastefulness of much contemporary life. Recently she produced an elaborate pendant in the shape of lungs beautifully punctuated with white cigarette filters.

Her work for *Welcome Signs* is 'For God so loved the world...'. It features 490 tiny plastic communion cups threaded in a necklace with pearls. Leopoldseder collected these cups from a church she attended, reflecting on the contradiction between the sacred ritual and its profane outcome. For her, it was...

“an acknowledgement of how far we fall, that even within this most sacred and enduring of rituals we have somewhat missed the point. Morphing communion into a convenient, disposable, individual, sanitized and, I believe irresponsibly wasteful version of its former self.”

The necklace is joined by a clasp in the shape of K’ruvim, as angels are known in the Hebrew story of the covenant. She quotes the Bible:

He (B’tzal’el) made the arc of pure gold,... He made two k’ruvim of gold: he made them of hammered work for the two ends of the arc cover – one keruv for one end and one for the other end; he made the k’ruvim of one piece with the arc-cover at its two ends. the k’ruvim had their wings spread above, so that their wings covered the arc; their faces were toward each other and toward the arc cover. – Exodus 37: 6 – 9
Complete Jewish bible



*Katheryn Leopoldseder 'For God so loved the world... (70 x 7 Used, Disposable Communion Cup Necklace)
490 recycled communion cups, fresh water pearls, 18ct gold, Gold plated sterling silver, stainless steel,
2008, 260cmL x 8cmW x 3cmH, photograph by Jeremy Dillon*

The number 7 x 70 of cups corresponds with a later Biblical story:

Then Kefa came up and said to him (Jesus), "Rabbi, how often can my brother sin against me and I have to forgive him? As many as seven times?" "No, not seven times," answered Yeshua, "but seventy times seven!" – Mathew 18:21-22 Complete Jewish Bible

An important element of this work is the way it leaves its references incomplete. Rather than the whole angel, only the wings feature on the clasp. And the title, engraved in the first cup, only hints at the complete quote:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.-John 3:16

It is quite unusual today to find jewellery based on religious meaning, despite the strong history of association. There's a danger that it might limit the interest in the way to those of the same faith.

While 'For God so loved the world...' does certainly respond to particular Christian themes, I think it also has a broader appeal. The need to care for the planet has become a sacred cause in contemporary life, yet there is little formal structure to underpin this value. Is environmentalism a matter of enjoying our time on the planet a little longer, or does it rest on a deeper sense of ourselves as custodians of something greater? These are questions left unanswered by contemporary politics. While I don't think this work provides an answer, it does ask the question.

In relation to *Welcome Signs*, Leopoldseder's work engages with the history of the garlands as a ritual neckpiece that mark important occasions. While we might have taken for granted the abundance of nature in supplying the materials for these garlands, today we are alerted to the sacrifices that attend any celebration. Hers is a garland for our fraught times.